

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 23111 130810Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 VO-05 DEAE-00 /056 W
-----084117 131342Z /45

R 131458Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9257
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: REF
SUBJ: SCHEME FOR RESETTLEMENT OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN
BOLIVIA

1. IN AN AUGUST 6 CONVERSATION WITH THAILAND REPRESENTA-
TIVE FOR FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY DULAL C. BORPUJARI, HE STATED
THAT THE BOLIVIAN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT WILL BE SENDING
OFFICIALS TO THAILAND IN LATE SEPTEMBER TO SELECT ABOUT A
THOUSAND HMONG REFUGEES FOR RESETTLEMENT IN BOLIVIA.

2. DULAL SAID THERE IS STILL NO FINAL TIMETABLE FOR
DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST 1000 REFUGEES. THE INITIAL PLAN
HAD BEEN TO SEND 10 REFUGEES TO HELP WITH SITE PREPARA-
TION, PRIMARILY THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIX KILOMETERS OF ROAD
FROM A HIGHWAY TO THE PROJECT SITE. A JEEP TRACK
WILL BE OPENED BY LATE SEPTEMBER WITH THE GOAL OF OPENING
A MORE PERMANENT ROAD WITHIN SEVERAL MONTHS. GIVEN THIS
PROGRESS, DULAL SAID THAT FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY MAY WISH TO
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SEND ALL 1000 REFUGEES TOGETHER TO BOLIVIA SOMETIME IN THE
FALL.

3. DULAL SAID THAT THE MAJOR UNCERTAINTY AS TO DATE OF
DEPARTURE FOR THE REFUGEES IS THE LACK OF FUNDS TO
TRANSPORT THEM. FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY ESTIMATES THAT FOR
1000 REFUGEES, TRANSPORTATION COSTS TO BOLIVIA WILL BE

ABOUT 300,000 DOLLARS (470 DOLLARS PER CAPITA FOR ADULTS, BUT SUBSTANTIALLY LESS FOR CHILDREN). ACCORDING TO DULAL, UNHCR AND ICEM HAVE BOTH REJECTED FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE IN TRANSPORTATION FUNDING.

4. DULAL SAID THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BOLIVIA IS NOW EVEN MORE FAVORABLE FOR THE RESETTLEMENT PROJECT THAN BEFORE. KEY EXECUTIVE OFFICIALS SUPPORT THE VENTURE. COMMENT ON THIS OBSERVATION FROM EMBASSY LA PAZ WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

5. RECOMMENDED ACTION: GIVEN FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY'S INTENTION TO MOVE A LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES TO THE PROJEC SITE, RATHER THAN A MORE PHASED APPROACH WHICH HAD BEEN PLANNED EARLIER, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDER REQUESTING A UNHCR ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT. AN ASSESSMENT WOULD PERMIT CORRECTION OF ANY MAJOR DEFICIENCIES BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF LARGE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES. WE RECOGNIZE THAT LETTING MATTERS TAKE THEIR COURSE MIGHT BE EASIER, BUT ON THE PREMISE THAT CORRECTIVE ACTION NOW IS EASIER THAN ATTEMPTING TO SALVAGE THE PROJECT LATER, WE BELIEVE THERE IS A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR AN ON-SITE EVALUATION AT THIS TIME. THIS EVALUATION WOULD NOT OBLIGE PAYMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FUNDS AT THIS JUNCTURE. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY CONSIDERATION ON TRANSPORT FUNDS SHOULD AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF AN INITIAL TRANCHE OF REFUGEES IN BOLIVIA AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TANGIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE PROJECT IS PROCEEDING SATISFACTORILY. FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY HAS INDICATED IT WOULD WELCOME A SERIOUS EVALUATION OF ITS PROPOSAL BY THE UNHCR OR OTHER ORGANIZATION(S). ABRAMOWITZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO23111
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780331-0480
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780869/aaaacfiz.tel
Line Count: 98
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ceff0d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1753097
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SCHEME FOR RESETTLEMENT OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN BOLIVIA
TAGS: SREF, US, TH
To: STATE GENEVA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ceff0d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014